

June 19, 2003

To: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **REVIEW OF PROPOSAL FOR MISSING SEX OFFENDER LOCATION UNIT**

On February 11, 2003, your Board requested the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to review and report back on the feasibility of implementing a proposal from Judge J. D. Smith regarding how the County and Sheriff's Department could work together to ensure that missing sex offenders are located. The CAO was further instructed to consider the possibility of utilizing the Sheriff's current crime lab facility located at 2020 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, after completion of the new crime lab at Cal State Los Angeles. We completed our analysis and do not support implementation of the proposal.

The attached report from the Sheriff's Department also considered the feasibility of implementing Judge Smith's proposal and suggests an alternative plan requiring increased deployment of Reserve Deputies. We agree with the Sheriff's plan and have included his recommendations as part of our analysis.

### **Proposal**

Judge Smith proposes the creation of a centralized Missing Sex Offender Location Unit (MSOLU) comprised of volunteer retired law enforcement officers and under the direction of an individual who would report directly to the Board. The MSOLU's mission would be to assist the Sheriff's Department with locating and registering missing sex offenders by searching internet records and law enforcement electronic databases. When located, the MSOLU would obtain arrest warrants then forward the information to the appropriate law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the residential area. In addition, the proposal calls for an official MSOLU website to be developed which will

publicize the MSOLU and provide a venue for citizens to receive and disseminate information about missing and unregistered sex offenders.

The desired outcomes of Judge Smith's proposal include: 1) establishing a full-time task force dedicated to locating missing or unregistered sex offenders; 2) developing an official MSOLU website; 3) appointing a director to liaison between the Board, local law enforcement, and various agencies; 4) allowing law enforcement personnel more time to perform other crime suppression duties; and 5) serving as a model for other local, state and national agencies.

## **Analysis**

Based upon our review, estimated implementation costs for the MSOLU include one-time start-up costs of \$100,000 for computers, office equipment, and miscellaneous supplies, plus a minimum of \$275,000 in on-going operational requirements for salaries and employee benefits (S&EB), supplies, and website maintenance. These requirements include \$225,000 in S&EB for one director (manager), one administrative/clerical position, and one data systems/webmaster position, \$10,000 for miscellaneous services and supplies, and \$40,000 in potential lease costs. Lease costs could be eliminated if the MSOLU is moved to the Sheriff's current crime lab located at 2020 Beverly Boulevard in 2005-06 when the new crime lab facility at Cal State Los Angeles is completed. However, it should be noted that space requirements to maintain current crime lab operations have not yet been determined.

While the proposed concept may have merit, we do not support creating a centralized MSOLU at this time. It is our finding that: 1) it is inappropriate to appoint a director who would report directly to the Board rather than the Sheriff; 2) retired law enforcement officers generally do not volunteer their services for a sufficient amount of time necessary to effectively operate the MSOLU; and 3) due to the County's current budget crisis, estimated implementation requirements would be cost prohibitive.

## **Background**

On January 14, 2003, on motion of Supervisor Antonovich, your Board requested the Sheriff to: 1) provide information regarding the current methods of verifying the accuracy of residence information provided by registered sex offenders, including recommendations for increasing efforts to ensure that registered sex offenders comply with the requirements of Megan's Law; 2) explore using retired and reserve officers and Sheriff volunteers to perform verification of the information provided in the sex offender registry; and 3) seek State legislation to enhance the reporting requirements of convicted sex offenders under Megan's Law.

In a response dated January 28, 2003, the Sheriff reported that registration and tracking of sex offenders is decentralized to each Sheriff station. Specifically, station Detectives are responsible for ensuring sex offender case files are up-to-date and in compliance with Megan's Law, and as other duties permit, verifying the accuracy of residence addresses by personally visiting the location. In addition, when offenders cannot be located, detectives attempt to find the individuals by searching various law enforcement databases, the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and the offender's criminal history to determine whether the offender had been arrested in another part of the state. Detectives also visit the offender's last known location to speak with current residents and neighbors in an attempt to locate the offender. Upon conclusion of the investigation, if the missing sex offender has not been located, charges are filed with the District Attorney for consideration of obtaining an arrest warrant. Station Detectives utilize Reserve Deputies to assist with these efforts.

### **Alternative Proposal**

In an April 10, 2003 letter to your Board, the Sheriff stated that while the Judge's proposal has merit, he believes using Reserve Deputies to locate missing sex offenders would be more effective in serving the community while accomplishing all of the proposed duties without serious limitations. Specifically, Reserve Deputies: 1) possess the requisite peace officer status and training necessary to access the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System and other database resources; 2) can work independently (including in-the-field home address verification); 3) work a minimum of 20 hours per month; and 4) utilize existing station office space and equipment.

Although the Sheriff's Department currently uses Reserve Deputies to assist Station Detectives with locating missing sex offenders, a plan for expanded use of Reserve Deputies in this capacity has not yet been implemented. In addition to the Sheriff's alternative proposal, other viable alternatives for improving the Department's effectiveness in locating non-compliant and missing sex offenders are being considered. The Sheriff's Department has not determined when a final decision will be made, or when implementation will occur.

### **Conclusion**

While we appreciate the concept of Judge Smith's proposal, we believe sex offender registration and monitoring should remain under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Department rather than under the direction of an MSOLU with a director reporting to your Board. In addition, we support the Sheriff's alternative proposal to increase the deployment of Reserve Deputies, where feasible, to assist station Detectives in locating and registering missing sex offenders.

Each Supervisor  
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Please feel free to contact me if you require additional information, or your staff may contact Brian Mahan at (213) 893-2297.

DEJ:SRH:DL  
RG:BAM:ljp

Attachment

c: Sheriff Leroy D. Baca

missing1.bm